

ALESSANDRO COMBA.

JUNE 16, 1910.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. BURNHAM, from the Committee on Claims, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany S. 8140.]

The Committee on Claims, to whom was referred the bill (S. 8140) for the relief of Alessandro Comba, have given the same a careful consideration and beg leave to submit a report, with the recommendation that the bill pass without amendment.

The facts in the case are fully set forth in the following letters and inclosures from the chairman of the Isthmian Canal Commission and the Secretary of War:

ISTHMIAN CANAL COMMISSION,  
*Culebra, Canal Zone, February 2, 1909.*

SIR: On September 21, 1907, Alexander Comba, an Italian laborer, was run over at Corozal by an engine, in which accident his legs were crushed, necessitating their amputation. He was carrying a can of water on his head to the gang with which he was working, and while crossing the railroad tracks did not notice an engine approaching, and when the engine whistled did not move fast enough to get out of the way.

He was immediately taken to Ancon Hospital and given every attention, but his recovery has been very slow and he is still lying in the hospital, over sixteen months after the accident. The only relief that can be given him, under the commission regulations, is pay for thirty days' meritorious sick leave on account of injury in each calendar year, and this has been done. In addition to this, the commission sent Comba to New York and had him supplied with artificial limbs, although I fear he will never receive any benefit from them, as he is a man 55 years old and the stumps of his limbs are very tender and probably will never permit the use of the limbs with which he has been fitted. As soon as he is able to leave the hospital, it is proposed to give him some light employment where he can support himself.

In the meantime, however, the man's family is in want. He has a wife and three children and has petitioned the commission for compensation equivalent to a year's wages. I have the honor to recommend that Congress be requested to appropriate the sum of \$500 for this employee, as I believe the case to be a worthy one, and such consideration on the part of the commission will have a good effect upon all the laborers engaged on the work.

The Italian ambassador at Washington has interested himself in this case to a considerable extent, as the files of the Washington office will show.

Respectfully,

GEO. W. GOETHALS, *Chairman.*

The SECRETARY OF WAR,  
*Washington, D. C.*

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
Washington, May 4, 1910.

SIR: I transmit herewith, for your information, a copy of a letter addressed to the Isthmian Canal Commission, under date of April 30, 1910, by the Acting Secretary of Commerce and Labor, relative to the case of Alessandro Comba, an Italian laborer, who lost both legs on September 21, 1907, while employed on the Panama Canal.

This man is now at Ellis Island, New York, but, as stated in the letter above mentioned, it is the intention of the Department of Commerce and Labor to deport him to Italy at an early date, although it is considered much to his interest to receive the amount of such an appropriation as may be made for his relief before he leaves the United States.

This man's case is specially referred to in the message transmitted to Congress by the President, of February 8 last, recommending relief for certain employees of the Isthmian Canal Commission injured prior to August 1, 1908, while in the discharge of their duties, and the particulars of the accident are set forth in the letter accompanying the message from Colonel Goethals to the Secretary of War, dated February 2, 1909, such letter containing a recommendation for the payment to Comba of \$500.

I also transmit copies of the following correspondence, showing the interest that has been taken in this man's case by the Italian ambassador at Washington: Letter from Italian ambassador to Secretary of State, January 24, 1910; letter from Secretary of State to Secretary of War, January 31, 1910; letter from Secretary of War to Secretary of State, February 2, 1910.

If it is not the intention to pass the general legislation recommended by the President in the message heretofore referred to at an early date, it is respectfully suggested that the facts in Comba's case warrant the immediate passage of a special bill for his relief.

A similar letter to this is being addressed to the chairman of the House Committee on Claims.

Very respectfully,

J. M. DICKINSON,  
Secretary of War.

The CHAIRMAN COMMITTEE ON CLAIMS,  
United States Senate.

[Translation.]

ITALIAN EMBASSY,  
Washington, January 24, 1910.

MR. SECRETARY OF STATE: Referring to note No. 771 of the State Department under date of May 17, 1909, relating to the Alessandro Comba case, I would call attention to the fact that said note was accompanied by a copy of a letter to your excellency from the acting Secretary of War regarding the Comba accident. I will copy here in full the text of that letter, as follows:

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
Washington, May 11, 1909.

SIR: In reply to your letter of 6th instant making inquiry, at the instance of the Italian ambassador, as to the status of the case of Alessandro Comba, an Italian subject injured on the Isthmus in canal construction work, I have the honor to invite your attention to the accompanying copy of letter from the Secretary of War submitting the matter to the President with recommendation that Congress be requested to make an appropriation of \$500 for the relief of this man.

Upon inquiry at the White House I am informed by the secretary to the President that the President is holding the papers in question for use in the preparation of his annual message to Congress next December.

Very respectfully,

ROBERT SHAW OLIVER,  
Acting Secretary of War.

The month of December has been past for some time and no notice has been received by the embassy of the message being sent to Congress by the President of the United States along the lines indicated in General Oliver's letter. Meanwhile the unfortunate Comba is seeking relief in the various hospitals in which he is being successively harbored.

I should be particularly grateful to your excellency if you would kindly call the attention of the proper federal authorities to this pitiable case, to the end that an endeavor may be made to have appropriated in behalf of the unfortunate Comba the \$500 mentioned in the War Department's note.

Please accept, etc.

MAYOR.

Hon. P. C. KNOX,  
Secretary of State, Washington.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,  
Washington, January 31, 1910.

SIR: Referring to your department's letter of May 11, 1909, relative to the case of Alessandro Comba, an Italian subject, who was injured while employed on the Isthmian Canal construction work, by which was transmitted a copy of a letter to the President recommending that Congress be requested to make an appropriation of \$500 for the relief of this man, I have the honor to inclose herewith a copy of a note from the Italian ambassador at this capital on the subject.

As the ambassador urges that steps be taken looking to an early settlement of the matter, I have the honor to request that this department may be informed as to the appropriate reply to be made to his note.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

P. C. KNOX.

The SECRETARY OF WAR.

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
Washington, February 2, 1910.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 31st ultimo, inclosing a copy of a note from the Italian ambassador at this capital relative to the case of Alessandro Comba, an Italian subject, who was injured while employed on the Isthmian Canal construction work.

The ambassador quotes in his note the letter from this department to the State Department, of May 11, 1909, in which reference was made to the fact that a recommendation had been submitted to the President that Congress be requested to make an appropriation of \$500 for the relief of this man, and that the President was holding the papers in question for use in the preparation of his annual message to Congress, and the ambassador requests that the matter be again called to the attention of the proper federal authorities.

In reply you are informed that the President is now considering the forwarding to the Congress of a special message dealing with the subject of granting compensation to Canal employees for permanent injuries sustained prior to the date of the operation of the act of Congress of May 30, 1908, and it is understood that Comba's case will be especially referred to therein. It is believed that this message will be submitted to the Congress at an early date, and a copy of the same will be furnished you for transmission to the Italian ambassador as soon as it is available.

Very respectfully,

J. M. DICKINSON, *Secretary of War.*

The SECRETARY OF STATE.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND LABOR,  
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY,  
Washington, April 30, 1910.

GENTLEMEN: Alessandro Comba, while working in the Canal Zone, lost both his legs on September 21, 1907. He was cared for in the hospital there and then sent to New York, where he landed July 6, 1909, and was taken to Blackwells Island Hospital. In December, 1909, he was removed to Ellis Island.

I have delayed deporting this man to Italy as it has been my understanding that your commission expected to secure an appropriation of \$500 for his relief, and I feel it much to his interest to have all of this money delivered to him before leaving the United States, fearing that if it should be sent to him he might not receive the full benefit of it.

I did this because the man had already been in the care of the Government and maintained at its expense for over two years, and I thought that a few months more would not make a material difference. I feel now, however, that the alien should be deported unless there is an immediate prospect of his getting this money. Can you tell me what the chances are for this and, if there is to be an appropriation, at what time it will be made and paid to this alien?

Respectfully,

BENJ. S. CABLE,  
*Acting Secretary.*

ISTHMIAN CANAL COMMISSION,  
Washington, D. C.

